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I am pleased to report that the largest cigarette company in the United States, Philip Morris, has voluntarily introduced "Action Against Access," a comprehensive program designed to prevent minors from buying cigarettes. Let me commend Philip Morris for this action.

Although there is disagreement over whether adult smoking should be restricted, I think all of us can agree that cigarettes should not be available to our youth.

As my colleagues may recall, the Congress confronted the issue of youth access to tobacco products when it passed the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration ("ADAMHA") Reorganization Act of 1992, which conditions substance abuse block grants to the states on the existence and enforcement of laws restricting tobacco product sales to minors. As part of its program, Philip Morris has announced that it will work to enact reasonable state legislation to require the licensing of retailers who sell cigarettes, provide enforcement and sanctions for violations of state youth access laws, and prevent the purchase of cigarettes by minors from vending machines. I am confident that Philip Morris' efforts will serve to further advance the progress already being made on this front as a result of the ADAMHA law.

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Philip Morris, the largest tobacco company, has just ^{free} launched a series of voluntary initiatives aimed at ^{keeping} getting cigarettes out of the hands of ^{cigarette} young people. These initiatives attack many of the activities -- sampling and vending machine sales, for example -- that critics of the industry have identified as contributing to the easy availability of cigarettes to minors.

Of course, critics who have embraced such measures in the past still may not be satisfied with these steps, because theirs is a one-issue agenda -- prohibition of all cigarettes. ^{sales -} But I hope that those who sincerely want to stop young people from ^{having access to} buying cigarettes will support this program and will work cooperatively to make it successful.

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Today, we witness that it is not necessary for the heavy hand of the federal government to come crashing down on industry in order for progress to be made. Philip Morris, the largest cigarette manufacturer in the world, has announced "Action Against Access," a comprehensive voluntary initiative to prevent youth access to cigarettes. For example, Philip Morris has committed to immediately discontinue ~~free~~ ^{free cigarette} product sampling and the distribution of its ~~products~~ ^{cigarettes} through the mail. The company will change its packaging to include a notice that the sale of the product to minors is prohibited and ~~it~~ ^{we} will undertake a major retail compliance training program called "Ask First/It's the Law." Philip Morris also will support tough new state laws to prevent minors from getting cigarettes.

These efforts will be monitored by an independent auditor, former U.S. Senator Warren Rudman. Combined with the federal, state and local programs already in place, Philip Morris' initiatives will move us significantly closer to our goal of restricting the availability of cigarettes to young people.

I hope that FDA Commissioner Kessler -- who is proposing to regulate the personal choices of adult smokers under the guise of protecting kids -- will realize there is no void for the FDA to fill in this area. As the American people have repeatedly tried to tell us, government regulation is not always the answer.

I commend Philip Morris for undertaking this voluntary effort.

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I rise to commend Philip Morris for launching "Action Against Access," a voluntary program to ^{prevent}~~reduce~~ youth access to cigarettes.

This program includes measures identified as essential components in any strategy to prevent youth smoking. Such measures have been recommended in reports issued by public health and law enforcement groups, including a 1994 working group of state attorneys general, the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General.

The existing evidence from the states and localities that have already begun taking steps to reduce youth access to cigarettes suggests that the implementation of one or more of the long list of measures now included in the Philip Morris program will reduce youth access to cigarettes. The much more ambitious efforts to be undertaken by Philip Morris are bound to yield even greater progress.

This voluntary action by a major corporation should once again make clear that government regulation is not the solution to every problem.

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At a time when Congress is taking steps to reduce the degree of regulation in people's lives and allow the private sector and the states to reclaim responsibilities currently addressed at the federal level, Philip Morris is setting an example of how a company can act voluntarily to meet the public interest. This company, which holds a major share of the cigarette market, recently announced "Action Against Access," a voluntary program the aim of which is to prevent minors' from ^{having access to} buying cigarettes.

Philip Morris is undertaking a number of initiatives and committing significant resources to this goal. For example, the company will fund a major retail training program called "Ask First/It's the Law." To back these efforts, Philip Morris will withhold merchandising ^{benefits} ~~payments~~ from stores that are fined or convicted of breaking minimum age ^{cigarette sales} laws. Philip Morris will also ^{for} support state legislation designed to restrict minors' access to vending machines, require retailer licensing and add minimum age signage ^{posting} requirements.

I hope that this voluntary effort ~~by industry~~ ^e will serve as an example to some of my colleagues who are often too quick to recommend a federal solution to what can more properly and efficiently be handled by the private sector or the states.

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